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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the 2003 issues of a quarterly newsletter for Illinois early childhood program directors, providing information on current issues in early childhood education. Regular features in each issue include: "The Director's Toolbox," delineating practical suggestions for directors related to program policies and staff issues; "The Accreditation Corner," detailing procedures for self-evaluation related to accreditation; "Family Friendly Practices," describing early childhood programs especially involved in meeting families' needs; and "Director's Profile," highlighting the accomplishments of early childhood education or care program directors in Illinois. Periodic features include updates on current training opportunities and grant availability, summaries of relevant research, and book reviews. The Spring issue explores the notion of staff recruitment as a continuous process. The Summer 2003 issue highlights director leadership as critical to improving quality of early care and education. The Fall 2003 issue focuses on preparing a leadership succession plan for early childhood centers. The Winter 2003 issue focuses on what early childhood programs can do to foster partnerships with parents (HTH)

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The Director's Link, 2003.

Doug Clark, Ed.

Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University

2003

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The Director's Link

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University **Winter 2003**

Parent Partnerships: What Programs Can Do To Make Them Happen

By Karen Stephens

Good child care doesn't happen by accident; it flourishes by design. It involves wise "behind-the-scenes" teamwork. Busy parents and program staff often take teamwork for granted. Worse, they don't realize they're all part of the same team! But children are never nurtured in isolation. A bridge between home and center must be built if children are to be sensitivley and appropriately supported.

A true parent partnership is much more than lip-service to "family-friendly" practices. It's not enough for programs to have an open-door policy, include parents on an advisory board, or provide a parent resource library. These efforts are a good start. But building strong relationships with parents involves much more. For a partnership to flourish, teachers and parents must believe in their hearts that each party has something unique and positive to contribute. The essence of such relationships is mutual trust and respect.

Staff with positive attitudes toward parents strive to break down the artificial boundaries separating home and center. They see parents as a valuable resource in understanding effective ways of responding to a child's unique needs and temperament—how a child likes to be held, diapered, fed, and soothed when upset. When teachers respect the cultural nuances of different parenting styles and openly talk about ways to ensure consistency between home and the classroom, the child surely benefits.

Building strong parent partnerships is at the core of high-quality programming. Below are specific teambuilding strategies for you and your staff to consider. Consistently applied, they lay the foundation from which a long-term partnership can flourish.

Meaningful Communication Counts

The groundwork for a partnership with parents is laid before the child's first day of attendance. Warm-up visits are great for parents and children. Help parents know what to expect from your program. Provide a simple, clear parent handbook and enrollment contract. If your orientation packet takes forever for parents to wade through, it may be perceived and overwhelming or intimidating. Consider offering a condensed version of the most frequently asked questions to accompany your handbook.

During the first weeks of a child's enrollment, provide opportunities for staff and parents to talk about the child's likes, dislikes, overall temperament, and developmental milestones. If parents can't meet in person, provide them with a cassette tape to record their thoughts. Let them know you are interested in hearing their personal goals for their children. The point is to open and sustain lines of communication.

Arrival and dismissal times are prime opportunities to connect with parents. Try to have plenty of staff on hand during morning arrival so teachers can greet parents in a relaxed manner and hear how the child's night and early morning went. The same thing applies to afternoon dismissal. As children wrap up end-of-day free play, teachers should be able to share highlights of the child's day with parents without feeling rushed.

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Continued from front page

Help Parents Comply With Program Policies

Most programs identify illnesses that exclude children from attendance. For working parents, finding alternative care arrangements for sick children is often a real problem. If parents don't have family leave time to use, provide resources for finding alternate care for an ill or recuperating child. For instance, some communities have back-up child programs or a drop-in center for mildly ill children.

Nursing schools, hospitals, or nanny agencies in your community may offer "sitters on call" for parents in need of temporary care. After locating resources in your community, post them on a web site, publish them in your center's newsletter, or distribute a resource flyer. Most parents want to cooperate in heeding center policies regarding ill children; some need more help than others knowing how to do so.

Respond to the unique needs of your parents so they are aware of policies. If it's easier for parents to read the information in another language, listen to a tape, or log on to a web site, accommodate these special communication needs. It takes time, but being responsive to your clientele strengthens your relationship with parents. There are creative ways for getting such resources developed. Tap into the time and talent of senior volunteers, high school and college students pursuing independent study, and other service groups with specialized expertise.

Invite Parent Assistance

When questions arise or problems occur in dealing with a specific child, capitalize on these opportunities to seek parent input. Be gracious rather than accusatory. Avoid blaming parents. Instead seek their assistance as a valued, informed partner. For instance, ask parents how they think each of you can nurture or reinforce targeted developmental skills such as toilet training, independent dressing and grooming, or picking up play things.

Parents of children with disabilities should be asked about professional resources related to their child's special needs. For instance, staff may need a parent to show them how to secure a child with cerebral palsy into a wheelchair. Parents can also provide staff with information to read about a child's specific disability.

Include Parents in the Joy of Child Care

Assume parents are shy. Don't wait for them to offer to participate in the classroom. Go beyond inviting them to just observe or lend an extra pair of hands on a field trip. Distribute surveys to determine parents' hobbies, skills, or special talents. Then creatively find ways to integrate them into your program. Children, families, and staff build stronger bonds from such shared experiences.

Organize monthly parent-teacher nights with child care provided so parents (and staff who have children of their own) can attend. Offer special events such as family-night-out potlucks or parenting workshops. Be sure to include parents in the planning! Working together toward a common goal allows staff and parents to forge friendships in a casual non-threatening way.

Share Information Regularly

Programs that strive to be keep lines of communication open, schedule parent conferences at least twice a year. Make the experience reciprocal by asking parents to think of topics they'd like to discuss. Don't rush the process. Conferences should allow for at least 30 minutes of uninterrupted conversation. If a developmental checklist is provided, use triplicate forms: one to file and one for each parent. This is particularly important when a child's parents don't reside together.

Respect Confidentiality

Child care staff can respond more sensitively to children when they are aware of potentially stressful circumstances occurring in the home. Such events may include separation or divorce, the birth of a sibling, family illness, or even the death of a beloved pet. So that parents will be more likely to inform teachers about such situations, create and distribute a written confidentiality statement. Follow it to build parent trust.

Acknowledge Parent Contributions Whenever Possible

Expressed gratitude, respect, and appreciation go a long way in teambuilding. Help staff develop the habit of acknowledging parents' positive contributions whenever possible. When teachers do that, parents almost always give the same respect in return. It's the stuff teams are made of.

Karen Stephens is Director of the Illinois State University Child Care Center and early childhood specialist for the ISU Family and Consumer Sciences Department. This article was adapted from her ***Parenting Exchange*** *column entitled "Parent-child care partnerships: Teambuilding steps to take." That column-distributed electronically-gives parents suggestions for building respectful partnerships with program staff. Log on to www.childcareexchange.com.*

The Director's Link is distributed free of charge to early childhood directors in Illinois. If you have received more than one copy of this newsletter, please share it with a colleague. Address corrections should be directed to:

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The Director's Toolbox

Parent Feedback Survey

Dear Parents,

This questionnaire is designed to find out how we are meeting needs of families enrolled in our program. Your candid and honest responses will enable us to improve communication and services for you and your child. Please circle the numeral from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) that best represents your feelings regarding each of the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree ←				→ Strongly Agree
1.	I have received adequate information about program policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My child received a warm introduction into the program.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Teachers encourage me to be actively involved in my child's learning.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I am regularly informed about my child's development.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Classroom newsletters and teachers' written notes keep me well informed.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I have had sufficient opportunity for informal conversations with the teaching and administrative staff.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My parent-teacher conferences have provided me with useful insights about my child.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I have been invited to participate in classroom activities and field trips.	1	2	3	4	5

How has your child benefited from his/her experience at this center?

In what ways could we improve the program to better meet your child's needs?

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Planning Ahead

NLU Courses for Directors

Spring Term begins
April 7, 2003

Online Courses

ECE512 (2 s.h.)
Early Childhood Curriculum

ECE593 (2 s.h.)
Seminar: Early Childhood Education

FND505 (2 s.h.)
Contemporary Issues in Education

On-Campus Courses

ECE510 (3 s.h.)
Child, Family, and Community

ECE593 (2 s.h.)
Seminar: Early Childhood Education

EPS500A (3 s.h.)
Human Development with a Focus on Early Childhood

For more information about the Early Childhood Administration degree program, contact Doug Clark at dclark@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7711

Attending the Chicago Metro AEYC Conference?

Be sure to join our
Suite Talk
hosted by CECL
Thursday, January 30, 2003
3:00 -4:30 pm

Chicago Hilton & Towers
Imperial Suite North

www.chicagometroaeyc.org

Professional Development Opportunities

Directors' Technology Training

March – April 2003

Made possible by funding from IDHS, the goal of *Directors' Technology Training* is to improve the computer skills of directors and increase their access to management resources through the Internet. Each seven-day training event is limited to 12 participants and priority is given to directors whose programs serve IDHS-funded children. Registration of $65 includes all course materials.

Introductory Training

Location: Northern Illinois University – Rockford
8500 East State Street, Rockford, IL

Dates: March 25, 26, and April 1, 2, 8, 9, 15

Participants may earn 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE534) by paying an additional $470.

Intermediate Training

Location: National-Louis University-Wheaton Campus
200 S. Naperville Road, Wheaton, IL

Dates: May 21, 28, 30, and June 4, 6, 11, 13

Prerequisite: ECE534. Participants may earn 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE535) by paying an additional $470.

Winter Management Institute: Family-Friendly Directors

February 28 – March 1, 2003

If you are interested in examining and improving your center's policies and practices from a family-responsive lens, this institute is for you! Center directors, assistant directors, curriculum coordinators, and owners of child care programs are encouraged to attend. Guest instructors Lila Goldston, Eileen Eisenberg, and Karen Stephens will present two exciting days of practical information to help you strengthen your center's policies and practices to become more family centered.

If your center serves AT&T families, you are eligible to receive a scholarship covering all costs for this family-friendly institute, plus lodging, follow-up on-site technical assistance, technology support, and registration and housing for the *Leadership Connections* statewide directors' conference in May 2003. You will also be eligible to receive a quality enhancement grant for your center.

Location: Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University
Wheeling Campus Annex

Dates: February 28, 8:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m
March 1, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Registration is $199. This fee includes full participation in the training, handouts, and meals.

Participants may earn 2 s.h. of graduate credit by paying an additional fee and completing follow-assignments.

For more information about these training opportunities, contact Eileen Eisenberg at eeisenberg@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703

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The Accreditation Corner

NAEYC Accreditation: The Next Era

Since 1985, NAEYC's accreditation system has grown significantly bringing notable improvements to programs serving young children and their families. During the past two years, the leadership of NAEYC has engaged in a through evaluation of the accreditation system, looking at the scope and goals of the system as well as the process by which programs move through self-study to achieve accreditation status. Changes recently approved by the Governing Board of NAEYC will help achieve three broad goals:

- Establish NAEYC accreditation as the standard bearer for program excellence;
- Improve accountability for families and other stakeholders; and
- Build recognition for the value of NAEYC accreditation and NAEYC-accredited programs.

The next era of NAEYC accreditation will affirm accreditation as a force for improving children's well being and early learning. The recommended changes will also ensure that NAEYC accreditation remains the most reliable and accountable way to recognize quality early education programs.

Some of the first changes focus on improving service to programs that are seeking NAEYC accreditation. Among the anticipated enhancements are expansion of the Academy staff and leadership, new communications networks and strategies to get information to programs, and new software to schedule program visits.

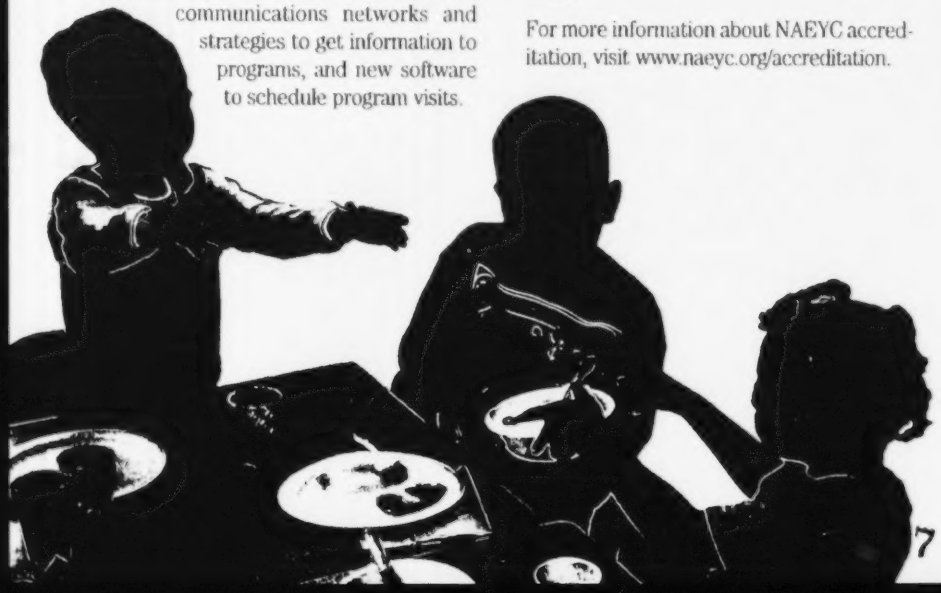
The NAEYC Governing Board appointed 10 members to the newly formed Commission on NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria. Members of the Commission will recommend new early childhood program standards and update NAEYC's accreditation criteria for programs.

The Commission will help strengthen the system by establishing program standards that identify the essential characteristics of high quality that programs must meet in order to be accredited by NAEYC. Over an 18-month period, they will meet regularly to develop new standards and criteria for consideration by the Board.

The changes that are being made will increase the accountability of the NAEYC accreditation system. They will also help more early childhood educators make improvements in their programs. They will encourage policymakers, employers, and others to support program improvements, and will inspire more parents and families to insist on high-quality NAEYC-accredited programs for their children.

These changes reflect a reinvented vision and mission for NAEYC accreditation. They call on families, community officials, and early childhood professionals everywhere to work together to ensure that many more children benefit from high-quality early learning experiences—now and in the future.

For more information about NAEYC accreditation, visit www.naeyc.org/accreditation.



Take *Time Out* with the Experts Online!

The Center for Early Childhood Leadership will host four nationally renowned early childhood experts on its Web site discussion forum *Time Out!* This is your opportunity to chat with the people who have written the books and helped shape early childhood policy and practice.

Monday, February 3 – Saturday, February 8
Guest expert: Cara B. Levinson, Employment Law Attorney
ADA Law: Implications for Center Directors

Monday, March 3 – Saturday, March 8
Guest expert: Karen Stephens, Illinois State University Lab School Director and Columnist
Promoting Your Family-Friendly Program

Monday, April 21 – Saturday, April 26
Guest expert: Judy Harris Helm Best Practices, Inc. Author and Training Consultant
Meaningful Activities and Experiences for Children

Monday, May 19 – Saturday, May 24
Guest expert: Chip Donohue, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee,
The Role of Technology in Early Childhood Professional Development: Obstacles and Opportunities

Each expert will be the featured guest for a week-long open discussion on issues of interest to center directors. Check out the Center's Web site (www.nl.edu/cecl) for information about how to log on.

Director's Profile

Sallee Beneke Long Winding Road Leads Back Home

Throughout her life as an early childhood professional, Sallee Beneke's personal journey has taken her far. On the road to her current post as the Director of the Early Childhood Education Center at Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby, Illinois, she has worked as a master teacher, prekindergarten at-risk teacher, and an early childhood special education teacher. Besides leading the lab school at IVCC, Sallee also teaches a course in *Documentation Practices and the Project Approach* and supports student teachers as they implement those practices at the Early Childhood Education Center.

Under the Sallee's leadership, the lab school at IVCC has become a model program in every way: earning NAEYC accreditation, being selected as a pilot site for implementation of the Work Sampling System-Illinois (WSS-IL) assessment tool, and for its literacy development practices which garnered the attention of Newsweek magazine in April 2002. "The Newsweek story was really exciting for us," said Sallee. "It was great to receive the recognition for our program and our teachers." The IVCC program will also be highlighted in the January 2003 issue of *Young Children* in a feature on meeting math standards for young children through the project approach.

Beyond the confines of IVCC, Sallee is active as a workshop presenter and is an accomplished writer. She recently gave presentations on the project approach to the National Black Child Development Institute and at the New England Kindergarten Conference. She also presented a series of workshops on the Illinois Early Learning Standards specifically developed for child care staff, and conducts training in work sampling and observation for the Illinois Resource Center.

In her latest book, *The Power of Projects: Meeting Contemporary Challenges in Early Childhood Classrooms, Strategies and Solutions*, she and co-editor Judy Harris Helm show how good project work can provide solutions to problems that seem overwhelming to many teachers of young children.

Sallee is also the author of *Rearview Mirror: Reflections on a Preschool Car Project*, and co-author of *Windows on Learning: Documenting Young Children's Work*. She is a member of the editorial review board for *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, the online journal published by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

Sallee's path has wandered through the heartland, with stops in Iowa for college and in Oklahoma while her husband Bill attended law school. It was during Bill's schooling that Sallee got her first taste of early childhood education as a preschool classroom assistant. She soon went on to earn a CDA, then early childhood teaching certification, a special education endorsement, and most recently a master's degree in Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Illinois.

Sallee's journey, has been amazing, but even more remarkable is how she has managed to stay connected with her hometown roots. Today, Sallee resides with her family in the 140-year-old house that she grew up in. Her four children represent the sixth generation in her family's lineage to live in the house. "This was always a dream of mine," says Sallee, "I love living in the small town that I grew up in. I feel so connected here, and I think this sense of "where I fit in" gives me a lot of strength."

Even though the road has made a full circle, Sallee's journey continues. If you ask her, she'll tell you she is enjoying the best of both worlds. At the moment, she is planning the science area for the model classroom to be presented by ISBE at the next Midwest AEYC conference, and is dreaming about the next house makeover project on her list. In her words, "I feel very fortunate that I've been able to raise my children here, while at the same time I've been able to participate in cutting edge projects in the field of early childhood."

LEADERSHIP **Connections**
May 8-10, 2003 • www.nl.edu/cecl

Leadership Connections
Chicago O'Hare Marriott
May 8-10, 2003

Don't miss out on this highly acclaimed professional development opportunity for early childhood leaders.

- Three stimulating days of training, exhibits, networking, and fun.
- Meet and learn from national experts in leadership and program management.

Your local CCR&R may have professional development funds to sponsor your attendance at *Leadership Connections*. For registration information, contact Jill Bella at (800) 443-5522, ext. 7706 or by e-mailing jbella@nl.edu. A conference brochure and registration form can also be downloaded from our Web site www.nl.edu/cecl.

The Director's Link

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University **Spring 2003**

Thinking about Recruitment as a Continuous Process

By Kay Albrecht

Stemming the incidence of high staff turnover begins with adopting a new way of thinking about the recruitment and hiring processes at your center. It means shifting paradigms from viewing recruitment as an isolated event to thinking about it as an ongoing process.

Continuous recruitment strategies engage a series of promotional activities, both traditional and innovative. Together, these tasks form the foundation of program stability by enabling you to quickly respond when a job vacancy does occur. A few examples are presented here.

Networking

In the case of recruitment, who you know is an important variable. Contacts within the local business and early childhood professional communities are potential sources for finding good job applicants. Make a conscious effort to broaden your professional contacts in your business community and professional associations. These contacts may yield surprising connections when a job vacancy does occur.

Directors who present workshops at professional meetings are not only building their leadership skills, but also becoming savvy recruiters. They know that participants at their workshop may some day be job candidates. Some membership organizations have job boards and provide resources and recruitment services for their members.

Colleges and universities that train teachers are excellent recruitment sources. Making contacts with faculty at these institutions could bring qualified applicants to your door. You might also volunteer your center as an observation site and welcome student observers or offer to speak to senior level classes. By sharing your expertise, experiences, and program culture with students, you plant a seed of interest in your center as a place to consider for employment after graduation.

If you think about recruitment as a long-term strategy, it also makes sense to contact local high schools, recreation centers, or other community groups for teenagers and young adults. Volunteer to present a workshop on careers in early childhood education at your local high school career fair or propose your center as a site for a babysitter's certification course. These long-term recruitment strategies can pay rich dividends in the years ahead.

Advertising

Advertising is available from many sources. The challenge is to find a good match between your financial resources and the strategy that generates the most applicants for you to consider.

Newspapers publish job advertisements as a regular feature. Be sure the demographics of the publication's readership matches your needs. Consider community newspapers which are delivered on a different schedule from daily newspapers and, because of the local flavor, may result in a different readership. Job advertisements published in a newspaper may also appear on the paper's Web site, so don't forget to ask if such options are available to you.

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Continued from front page

Local and state affiliates of professional associations also have newsletters that accept job advertisements. These are good because the audience is very targeted. Student newspapers or campus publications are another possibility for paid, and sometimes free, advertising

Colleges and universities have job placement bureaus that post available job ads for alumni of the university to access in their job searches. Explore these services, focusing especially on those universities that have trained the successful teachers on your staff. In addition to college job placement bureaus, there are many private job placement services whose mission is to recruit candidates for different businesses. Explore these options carefully as fees vary widely.

Posting job announcements on job boards at area colleges and universities, businesses, and charitable organizations gets the information about your job opportunities out to new audiences. Ask parents and staff to take job announcements with them to their places of employment or to leisure activities where job seekers might also attend.

Thinking Outside the Box

The heart of developing a continuous recruitment plan for your center is thinking of how recruitment can be tied to virtually all other systems and activities of your program. When you conceptualize recruitment in broad terms like this, it is amazing what creative strategies you'll come up with to attract high-quality candidates to your center as a place of employment. Here are a few that some directors have tried.

Parents may be able to identify potential employees from among their babysitting pools, friends, neighborhoods, or workplace. Notifying parents of recruitment needs makes them part of the recruitment team. Some programs even offer incentives to parents who refer applicants such as discounts on services, finder's fees, recognition in the center's newsletter, or invitations to serve on interview and selection committees.

You can use a similar referral program with staff. Recognizing that everyone is part of the recruitment team is important — a concept worth introducing, developing, and nurturing in your program. In schools with the established norm that staff are valued partners in attracting new colleagues, there is often an ancillary benefit of increased staff commitment to the center's goals. Participate in job fairs and career days held in your area. Visibility at events like these can lead adults who have not considered early childhood education as a career option.

Consider developing a Web site for your center. This will help ensure a visible, easy link to current and future job possibilities. Find out from frequent Internet surfers (perhaps among your parents or staff) which job-search sites are the most popular and explore ways to link your Web page to them.

Increasingly, early care and education programs are joining together to recruit. Several programs may advertise jointly, lowering the overall cost of advertising and generating applicants for all involved programs to consider. Other collaborations have used professional recruiters to broaden the search. Professional recruiters conduct many of the recruitment activities that are beyond the scope of an individual director, like visiting colleges and universities with early childhood/child development programs around the country. They also cast a wider net — looking in nontraditional places for potential applicants.

An Unexpected Benefit

Programs that implement a plan of continuous recruitment experience an unexpected benefit. Public relations between the school, the neighborhood, the educational community, and the larger community are enhanced. When the community's image of your program broadens to include it as a great place to work, you will be more likely to be successful in your recruitment efforts.

This article was adapted from *The Right Fit: Recruiting, Selecting and Orienting Staff* by Kay Albrecht. *The Right Fit* is the latest volume in the Director's Toolbox management series for early childhood administrators (New Horizons: Lake Forest, IL).

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"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant."

Max DePree

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The Director's Toolbox

Advertising for Job Vacancies

Sooner or later, every director needs to design an advertisement for an available job position. To ensure that you spend your recruitment dollars wisely, you'll want to pay close attention to the design elements of your advertisement.

Advice from the Experts

Not all recruitment ads are created equal. Here are some hints from experts about how to get the most from your ad. Although helpful, some of these ideas may be costly, so consider a range of strategies, and then pick the ones that you think will garner the most attention for the money.

- ✔ Bigger is better. The eye is drawn to larger ads, particularly if they are well designed.
- ✔ Don't scrimp on design. The visual appeal of your advertisement may determine whether it gets read or not.
- ✔ Add design features like logos, screening, or highlighted text. Include visuals that make your school unique, like buildings, photographs of children, or images of teachers at work.
- ✔ Use a catchy opening.
- ✔ Say what you have to say differently from everyone else.
- ✔ Describe the job sufficiently; however, leave readers wanting to know more. Remember, the purpose of any job ad is to draw potential applicants. If your ad leads readers to call you rather than another advertiser, you will have more applicants to consider.
- ✔ Avoid using abbreviations and jargon. You may know what they mean, but readers may not. Some abbreviations are regional or local, others may just be unknown. Avoid misunderstanding by eliminating jargon completely.
- ✔ Personalize your ad — make it unique.

Aldine ISD
STATE RECOGNIZED 1996-2001
Teachers' starting salaries as high as
$40,000
Where good teaching pays
HIGH SALARIES
"Two years ago, my best friend convinced me to leave Aldine and work in her district. There was no camaraderie among teachers. And there's the money. Aldine pays way more money for the same job. So I'm really happy I'm going back to Aldine."
Elaina Lee
Returns as 3rd Grade Teacher
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SUPPORT
"The professionalism and teamwork of the teachers is great. My principal has been outstanding in supporting new teachers as well. She just makes it a joy to teach here. Plus having almost 100% classroom participation by students makes me want to prepare the best lesson possible to grasp their excitement."
Tarriesh Williams
Spanish Teacher
Hamlin Ninth Grade School
Former Events Manager for Compaq Latin America
RESOURCES
"It's wonderful to have mobile and wireless electronic labs with laptops for each student in the classroom so they can do research on the Internet. Also it's great to have a paraprofessional in the classroom, especially with students at different instructional levels."
Cori Wadlin
Special Education Resource Teacher
Parker Intermediate School
TECHNOLOGY
"It's a real timesaver that much of our paperwork is on email and that attendance and grades are computerized. I also appreciate having 5-6 computers in every language arts classroom. Students at every high school in Aldine benefit from Nova Net Labs for credit recovery and Star Labs to take online courses."
Cindy Rogers
Language Arts Skills Specialist
MacArthur High School
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For more information, call 281-985-7278
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From: Albrecht, K. (2002). The Right Fit: Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff. New Horizons, P.O. Box 863, Lake Forest, IL. 60044 (847 295-8131). Reprinted with permission.

Planning Ahead

NLU Courses for Directors

Summer Term begins
June 30, 2003

Online Courses

ECE510 (3 s.h.)
Child, Family, and Community

On-Campus Courses

ECE593 (2 s.h.)
Seminar: Early Childhood Education

For more information about the Early Childhood Administration degree program, contact Doug Clark at dclark@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7711

ONLINE COHORT BEING FORMED FOR SUMMER

Applications are now being accepted for the 2003 convening of National-Louis University's online cohort graduate degree program in Early Childhood Administration (ECA). The 24-month sequence begins with an 11-day residency in June 2003 where participants meet other members of their cohort group and develop technology skills. A shorter retreat will be held in May 2004 and all other coursework will be delivered online. Eligible students may pursue a Masters in Education (M.Ed.) which is designed for students who have a BA degree or a Certificate of Advanced Studies (C.A.S.) which is designed for students who already have a master's degree in education. As a graduate student enrolled in the ECA program, individuals are also eligible to receive Level III of the Illinois Director Credential (IDC). To request an information packet, call Cory Roberts (800) 443-5522 ext. 7705 or e-mail her at ecaonline@nl.edu. Space in the cohort is limited.

Professional Development Opportunities

Directors' Technology Training

Intermediate Level

May – June 2003

The intermediate-level course builds on the introductory course experience and includes skill-building sessions in database management, photo editing, and desktop publishing. Each seven-day training event is limited to 12 participants and priority is given to directors whose programs serve IDHS-funded children. Registration of $65 includes all course materials. Prerequisite: ECE534.

Location: National-Louis University
Wheaton Campus

Dates: May 21, 28, 30, and June 4, 6, 11, 13, 2003

Participants may earn 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE535) by paying an additional $470.

Taking Charge of Change

August 4-9, 2003

Don't miss out on this highly acclaimed leadership training experience! 2003 marks the 11th cohort of *Taking Charge of Change*. This early childhood leadership training focuses on individual, organizational, and systemic change and the director's role as change agent. You'll be presented with a comprehensive model for improving the quality of your early childhood program. Through interactive learning, group discussions, guided reflection, reading, and writing, participants will learn how to implement change to achieve their program goals.

The training begins with an intensive six-day residential summer institute. Two follow-up retreats will be held to report on progress in implementing a program improvement plan. Mentors will be available for consultation during the year to assist participants in pursuing center accreditation. Space is limited to 28 participants. Priority is given to directors whose programs serve IDHS-funded children.

Location: Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University
Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee is $325, includes housing, food, and materials.

Participants may receive 6 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE525 Strategies for Supervision and Staff Development and EPS526 Organizational Theory, Group Dynamics, and Leadership Applications) by paying an additional fee. Application deadline is May 15, 2003.

For more information about these training opportunities, contact Eileen Eisenberg at eeisenberg@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703

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The Accreditation Corner

Early Learning Standards: Creating the Conditions for Success

In a jointly adopted statement, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) affirm that learning standards can be a valuable part of a comprehensive, high-quality system of services for young children. According to the statement, a developmentally effective system of early learning standards must include four essential features:

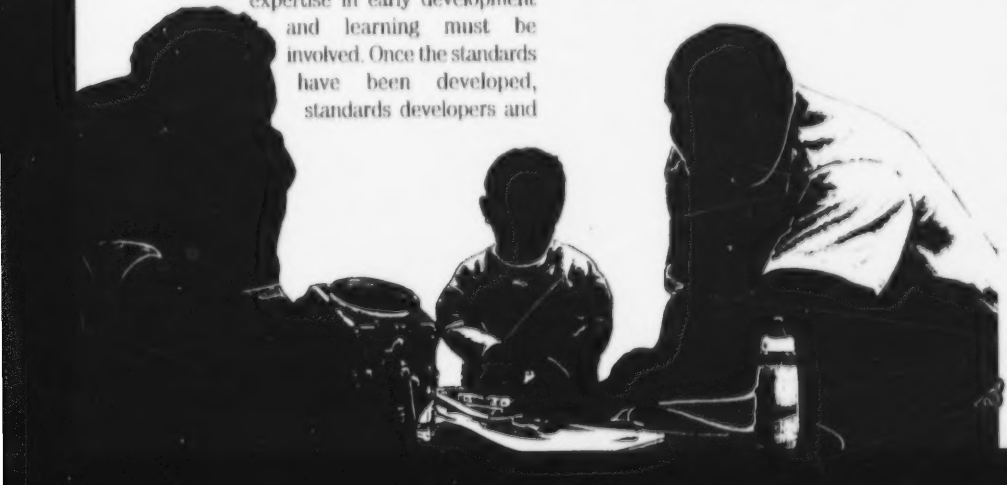
1. **Standards Must Emphasize Significant, Developmentally Appropriate Content and Outcomes**
   The standards should emphasize all domains of early development and learning and encompass the widest possible range of children's life situations and experiences, including disabilities. They should create appropriate expectations by linking content and desired outcomes to specific ages or developmental periods. The content and desired outcomes of the standards should be based on research about the processes, sequences, and long-term consequences of early learning and development.

2. **Standards Must Be Developed and Reviewed Through Informed, Inclusive Processes**
   The process of developing and reviewing the standards should involve multiple stakeholders, such as community members, families, early childhood educators, special educators, and other professional groups. In all cases, those with specific expertise in early development and learning must be involved. Once the standards have been developed, standards developers and relevant professional associations should ensure that standards are shared with all stakeholders, creating multiple opportunities for discussion and exchange.

3. **Standards Gain Their Effectiveness Through Implementation and Assessment Practices That Support All Children's Development in Ethical, Appropriate Ways**
   Tools to assess young children's progress should be clearly connected to important learning represented in the standards. They should be technically, developmentally, and culturally valid and should yield comprehensive, useful information. Assessment and accountability systems should be used to improve practices and services and should not be used to rank, sort, or penalize young children.

4. **Standards Require a Foundation of Support for Early Childhood Programs, Professionals, and Families**
   Significant expansion of professional development is essential if all early childhood teachers and administrators are to gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to implement early learning standards. The standards have the most positive effects if families — key partners in young children's learning — are provided with respectful communication and support.

For an executive summary of this position statement, *Early Learning Standards: Creating The Conditions For Success*, visit www.naeyc.org.



Family Friendly Practices

Carole Robertson Learning Center

The Carole Robertson Learning Center, operating from three sites, reaches out to families on Chicago's west side with a full compliment of services. The family-responsive focus of the CRLC mission is evidenced in the innovative ways the Center has extended its programs. Besides offering full-day child care to meet the needs of working parents, the center also offers an Adult Learning Institute, onsite college courses, and a wide range of workshops for families.

Speaking on behalf of CRLC, Infant-Toddler Coordinator Katherine Falen says, "We work hard to stay aware of the barriers people face in their efforts to move forward in their lives, and see it as our role to eliminate as many of those barriers as we can." Outreach programs are available to parents, members of the community, and staff. As Katherine puts it, "We offer opportunities for adults to begin or continue their education, to learn more about their own children, or the children they care for, and to meet other people who are juggling the difficult tasks of family, work, and personal growth."

Evenings are when most working adults can attend classes. Other community outreach organizations offer evening adult education programs, but the Carole Robertson Learning Center is among the very few agencies that provide care for the children of participants during these after-work-hours activities. According to Katherine, "Most parents would not have the option of taking a class, attending a workshop, studying English, or completing their GED if they also had to find someone to stay with their children and see that they were fed." To further address this critical need, meals are provided for the children. This frees up the adults to focus on their learning goals knowing their children are under the capable guidance of CRLC staff.

"This speaks to our agency's value of family..." says Katherine. "We see ourselves as one large family — and we value highly the families we serve."

LEADERSHIP Connections

May 8-10, 2003 • Chicago O'Hare Marriott

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A Conference for Early Childhood Administrators

- Three jam packed days of skill-building, energizing discussions, networking, and resource sharing.
- Featuring speakers from business, law, social work, health care, marketing, early childhood education, and other professional disciplines.
- Total conference package includes: opening luncheon, evening reception, continental breakfasts, box lunch, snacks, executive business tote, closing luncheon, and other gifts. All this for only $325.

For more information contact Jill Bella at jbella@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7706 or visit our Web site at www.nl.edu/cecl

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The Director's Link

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University **Summer 2003**

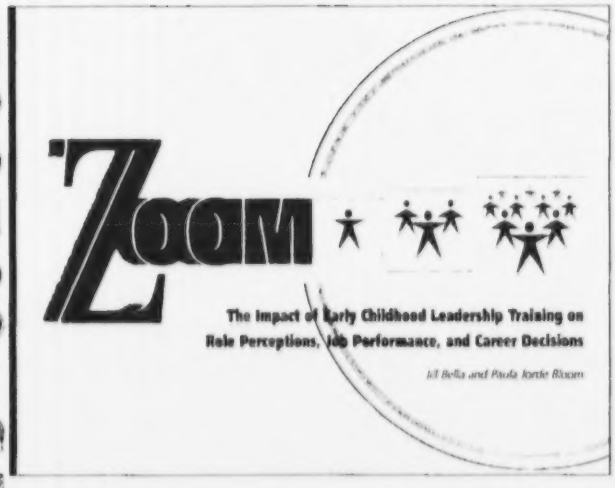
Improving the Quality of Early Care and Education...

One Director at a Time

Strong leadership is a vital component of any thriving organization. In early childhood organizations, strong leadership is particularly critical because directors are the gatekeepers to quality. They are the ones responsible for creating the climate that promotes optimal growth and development of children as well as implementing the systems to ensure that quality is maintained.

Over the past decade, an emerging body of research has provided strong evidence documenting the effect of leadership training on indicators of classroom quality and a center's overall organizational climate. Data are sparse, however, in documenting the long-term outcomes of training on participants' role perceptions, job performance, and subsequent career decisions.

The recently published report, *Zoom: The Impact of Leadership Training on Role Perceptions, Job Performance, and Career Decisions* summarizes findings from a year-long project undertaken by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership. To conduct the study, lead investigators Jill Bella and Paula Jorde Bloom contacted 278 individuals who had participated in two different models of leadership training between 1993 and 2003 to assess the impact of training on their role perceptions, job performance, and career decisions.


Zoom
The Impact of Early Childhood Leadership Training on Role Perceptions, Job Performance, and Career Decisions
Jill Bella and Paula Jorde Bloom

Participants were sent a letter and three-page self-report questionnaire and follow-up interviews were conducted with 104 individuals. Both the questionnaire and the interview asked participants to reflect and report on changes occurring in their professional and personal lives since the training.

The two leadership training models being investigated differed in length and intensity. The McCormick Fellows Leadership Training Program was a two-year program involving 34 semester hours of graduate-level coursework and on-site technical assistance to achieve NAEYC center accreditation. Taking Charge of Change, a training model that continues today, is a more streamlined leadership training program of approximately 110 clock hours of instruction and technical assistance over 10 months. Participants attend a six-day summer institute and two follow-up retreats.

The concept of zoom is a powerful metaphor for conveying the goals of leadership training as well as the personal transformation that takes place within individuals who engage in professional development to enhance their leadership capacity. Similar to the zoom lens of a camera, leaders must be able to shift from one perspective to another, viewing the same situation from different vantage points when making decisions, building systems, mentoring colleagues, evaluating actions, and serving as agents of change. This means having the capacity to step back and look at the big picture to determine the impact of different actions, while simultaneously being cognizant of the small details that influence people's reactions to any event. The authors of *Zoom* drew from their research to make the following conclusions.

Continued on page 2

Continued from front page

Role Perceptions. Both on the self-report questionnaire and in follow-up interviews, individuals repeatedly talked about the sense of empowerment they felt when they completed their leadership training and how that heightened sense of self-esteem literally transformed how they viewed their administrative role. These heightened feelings of self-efficacy have been sustained since they completed their training, empowering them to assume new challenges they would not have had the confidence to do otherwise.

Individuals who participated in both training models say the experience gave them a new perspective on their administrative role. The lens with which they previously viewed themselves was limited in scope, concentrating mostly on the details or nitty-gritty management issues of administering a program. They are now able to step back and take a broader view—the vision of what they want their programs to become.

Job Performance. The respondents in this study strongly agree that leadership training helped them become more reflective about their leadership behavior and provided them with concrete resources to perform their jobs better. Participants noted four clusters of skills, in particular, that had helped them in their management and leadership roles: interpersonal communication skills, group facilitation skills such as (mostly conducting effective meetings), decision-making skills (particularly participative management), and staff development skills.

Many of the respondents indicated that the training had revealed just how much they did not know about effective supervision and the dynamics of organizational leadership. This sense of "conscious incompetence" was not a discouraging realization, however. To the contrary, it served as a stimulus to learn more and to become more accomplished in their administrative role.

The data regarding changes in the accreditation status of their centers speak directly to the organizational changes that individuals have made as a result of their participation in leadership training. Today, 43% of the current directors' programs are accredited. This contrasts sharply with the overall 10% accredited figure for the state. It is clear the training has an impact on increasing participants' awareness of the importance of accreditation and assisting them with resources and support to make it happen.

Career Decisions. Perhaps the most encouraging data resulting from this study relates to career decisions. Of the 182 respondents in this study, 156 (86%) continue to work in the field of early childhood either as a director of a center-based program or in a related position supporting children and families. Sixty-five percent of this group continues to work for the same organization they worked for when they participated in the training. Fully 97% of the directors of center-based programs plan to be working in the field of early childhood five years from now.

Individuals who are not currently directing a program but continue to work in the field, left their previous positions either because of a desire for greater influence or the need for greater challenge. Of the 26 people who left the field of early childhood, 15 of them retired, had an illness, or took a hiatus from full-time employment to raise young children.

An equally promising development is the number of individuals who have gone on to take additional college coursework. Only 19% of the respondents had an advanced degree when they enrolled in the leadership training; 46% currently have a master's or doctorate. Forty-two percent of those with associate or bachelor's degrees report that they are enrolled in a degree program.

Virtually all of the participants indicated that their leadership training experience served as a stepping-stone to other professional development opportunities. For participants, the networking possibilities that resulted from participating in a cohort of participants from diverse program auspices was an important catalyst for career growth and ongoing development.

The rich empirical and anecdotal evidence collected from the *Zoom* initiative provides compelling evidence of how leadership training can change the early childhood profession from the inside out and from the bottom up, through changes in early childhood educators themselves. The results of this study underscore the need for systematic, intensive, and relevant training focused on the unique needs of early childhood directors.

The Director's Link is distributed free of charge to early childhood directors in Illinois. If you have received more than one copy of this newsletter, please share it with a colleague. Address corrections should be directed to:

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Early Childhood Leadership

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Wheeling, Illinois 60090-7201

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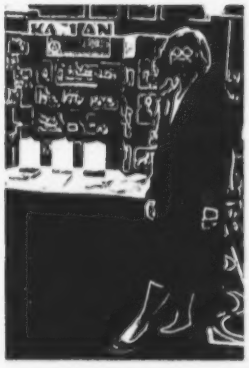
www.nl.edu/cecl

The full Zoom report is available in PDF format at www.nl.edu/cecl. A downloadable order form for the 42-page Zoom booklet is also available on the website, or by calling (800) 443-5522, ext. 7708.

LEADERSHIP Connections

May 8-10, 2003 • www.nl.edu/cecl

Hats off to the McCormick Tribune Foundation and the following corporate sponsors for their generous financial support.



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Thanks to the organizations and businesses that helped make Leadership Connections such a fantastic success!

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Planning Ahead

Special Invitation

Join us during the NAEYC Annual Conference

At a reception for friends of the Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Friday, November 7, 2003
5:00 - 7:30 PM

National-Louis University
Chicago Campus Atrium
122 South Michigan Avenue

NLU Courses for Directors

Fall Term begins September 15, 2003

Online Courses

EPS500A (3 s.h.)
Human Development with a Focus on Early Childhood

ESR506 (2 s.h.)
Graduate Research: Interpretive/ Critical

On-Campus Courses

ECE510 (3 s.h.)
Child, Family & Community

ECE512 (2 s.h.)
Early Childhood Curriculum

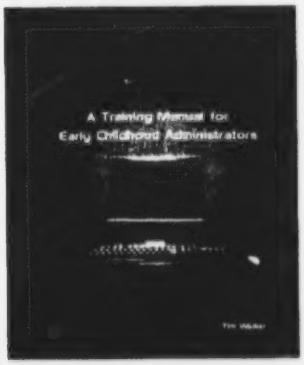
FND503 (3 s.h.)
Historical and Philosophical Foundations in Early Childhood

For more information about the Early Childhood Administration degree program, contact Doug Clark at dclark@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7711

Director's Bookshelf

Just Released ...

Microsoft Office XP: A Training Manual for Early Childhood Administrators



Developed especially for child care administrators, *Microsoft Office XP: A Training Manual for Early Childhood Administrators* is a one-stop guide to the essential features of Microsoft Office XP.

Funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services and authored by Tim Walker, Technology Coordinator at the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, the manual is full of handy tools for tackling the information management challenges administrators confront as they strive to build efficient and family-responsive programs.

Designed as both a tutorial and a reference, this all-in-one guide introduces each of the components of Office XP Professional—word processing, presentation graphics, spreadsheets, database management, personal management, and more. Each chapter contains practical tips and examples that address real-life scenarios from the business of child care. Definitions of important computer terms are also provided as they occur in each chapter, and a more extensive glossary is provided at the end of the book.

Whether you are computer novice or seasoned practitioner, this manual is a must for your management library. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, please e-mail the Center at timwalker@nl.edu or call (800) 443-5522, ext. 7702.

SAVE THE DATES
May 6-8, 2004

LEADERSHIP Connections
May 6-8, 2004 • O'Hare Marriott • Chicago, Illinois

Leadership Connections
Chicago Marriott O'Hare

Don't miss out on this highly acclaimed professional development opportunity for early childhood leaders.

- Three stimulating days of training, exhibits, networking, and fun.
- Meet and learn from national experts in leadership and program management.

Look for registration details in your mailbox this fall.

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Fall Management Institute

September 18 - 20, 2003

Transforming Learning Environments: Influences of the Reggio Emilia Approach

The infant-toddler and pre-primary centers in Reggio Emilia, Italy reflect a complex, integrated approach to early education involving three principal relationships: children, parents, and teachers. This institute will explore the important role that the environment plays in creating meaningful developmental experiences in the early childhood classroom.

Guest presenters will be Dr. Kay M. Albrecht and Ms. Karen Haigh. Dr. Albrecht is a nationally known speaker, author of several books, and a contributing editor to *Child Care Information Exchange*. She spent 18 months in Italy studying infant/toddler and preschool learning environments. Karen Haigh is Senior Vice President and Director of Programs for Chicago Commons Child Development Program. Since 1993, under Ms. Haigh's leadership, Chicago Commons has been integrating elements of the Reggio Emilia approach. Ms. Haigh is a contributing author of *First Steps Toward Teaching the Reggio Way* and the recently published *Next Steps Toward Teaching the Reggio Way*.

Location: The Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee is $250, includes food, all institute materials, and transportation for site visits to Chicago Commons Centers. Hotel accommodations are available at the Candlewood Suites.

Participants may receive 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE585R The Reggio Emilia Approach) by paying an additional fee.

Directors' Technology Training

October - November 2003

Made possible by funding from IDHS, the goal of Directors' Technology Training is to improve the computer skills of directors and increase their access to management resources through the Internet. Each seven-day training is limited to 12 participants and priority is given to directors whose programs serve IDHS-funded children. Registration of $65 includes all course materials.

Introductory Training

Location: National-Louis University, Chicago Campus

Dates: October 7, 14, 21, 28, and November 4, 11, 18, 2003

Participants may receive 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE534) by paying an additional fee.

Intermediate Training

Location: National-Louis University-Evanston Campus

Dates: January 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, 22, 27, 2004

Prerequisite: ECE534. Participants may receive 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE535) by paying an additional fee.

The Next Step

October 23-25, 2003

The Next Step is an advanced leadership training program designed for seasoned early childhood professionals. The training focuses on building coaching and mentoring skills, increasing cross-culture sensitivity, enhancing presentation skills, and preparing participants to become Illinois Director Credential professional growth advisors.

Space is limited to 20 participants. Experienced directors of accredited centers, college instructors, supervisors of multi-site programs, consultants, and early childhood leaders are encouraged to apply. Follow-up retreats will take place February 19-21, 2004 and at the Leadership Connections conference in May 2004.

Location: Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee is $350, includes housing, food, and materials.

Participants may receive four s.h. of graduate credit (ECE545 Presentation Skills for Early Childhood Leaders and ECE546 Strategies for Effective Coaching and Mentoring) by paying an additional fee.

Grantswriting in an Ever-Changing Economy

March 5-6, 2004

In the wake of a tightening economy and new policy priorities, directors need effective strategies for identifying and pursuing funding opportunities and developing successful grant proposals. Facilitated by Dr. Chip Donohue, this skill-building workshop for early childhood professionals will address grantswriting as an essential skill and examine the fundraising process as an integral part of an organization's strategic plan. Learn practical ideas about funding sources, national and state initiatives, and developing short- and long-range fundraising goals.

Location: The Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee: $199 includes food and all institute materials.

Individuals may receive 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE540 Grantswriting and Fundraising for Early Childhood Programs) by participating in a follow-up session at Leadership Connections in May 2004.

For more information about these training opportunities, contact Eileen Eisenberg at eeisenberg@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703

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Director's Profile

Debra Muscato Cherishes the defining moments of her professional calling

In any professional endeavor, the recipe for success requires several key ingredients: opportunity, risk, passion, dedication, and hard work are a few that quickly come to mind. Debra Muscato's success story is certainly an example of how "the right mix" of these ingredients can lead to exciting, but never predictable outcomes.

One could say that Debra's entree into the field of early childhood education was quite literally a "mountaintop experience." After earning a double major in elementary education and comparative literature from the University of Colorado, Debra began her career as a kindergarten teacher in Boulder. Soon after, she earned a master's degree in reading education and became a roving reading specialist for Boulder Valley Schools, traveling to all the elementary schools throughout the mountain school district.

In 1978 during a summer recess from her teaching job, Debra accepted a part-time position with a local child care center, a move that proved to be the first of many defining moments. Realizing her passion for teaching young children, Debra kept her job with the center and never returned to work with the school district. Soon after, she became the center's director.

After returning to her hometown Chicago in 1989, Debra held director positions at a privately-owned preschool and non-profit agency before accepting an opportunity with Bright Horizons Family Solutions four years ago. "I made such a good choice by going to Bright Horizons," she said. "The opportunity to grow and share professionally has been outstanding!"

Clearly, Debra's move to Bright Horizons was another of those career-defining moments. She is currently supervising the Bright Horizons corporate on-site center at Household International in Wood Dale, Illinois, which serves the families of 95 infants, preschoolers, and kindergartners.

The program at Household ranks among the nation's highest performing Bright Horizons centers. Debra has been named to the *Horizons Circle*, an elite group of directors who have been cited for management excellence. Under Debra's care, the program consistently leads the way in terms of positive work environment and high levels of client satisfaction.

Debra was recently honored as Bright Horizons' first US representative to participate in an international director exchange program. In May, she visited London to share with her counterparts at the Bright Horizons corporate site for British Petroleum (BP). A few weeks prior to her European visit, a director from the UK was Debra's guest to experience the world of child care stateside.

According to Debra, the experience was certainly another defining moment, an opportunity for both giving and receiving. "I grew because I realized how eager people were to learn new things and that my experiences so far had been a gift to me that I could share with others," she said. When asked about the advice she had to offer as a successful director, she went on to say "I shared what I know best, that a center is only successful when it has successful employees."

Having completed a second master's degree in Early Childhood Leadership & Advocacy, and the Taking Charge of Change and Next Step leadership training initiatives, she aspires to sharpen her business management skills by pursuing an MBA.

Besides tending to her regular duties as director of two child centers, Debra is involved as an NAEYC accreditation validator. In her spare time, she loves to scuba dive, and plays a number of musical instruments, including piano and flute. She recently started performing with a blues band on the weekends.

Debra is passionate about early learning and care, and each defining moment of her career has deepened the passion she has for serving young children and their families. She has a favorite metaphor to describe her love for the work she does — a snowflake. "No two days are ever the same," she says. I can't imagine anything being more rewarding!"

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The Director's Link

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Thinking About Your Successor

Paula Jorde Bloom

Ever wonder what would happen to your center if you were struck by lightening and died? A morbid thought to be sure, but one that makes every director I've posed this question to stand up straight and ponder. Does anyone else on your staff know the password to your computer? Does anyone else on your staff know the combination to the center's safe deposit box? Would anyone on your staff have the range of skills, knowledge, interest, or desire to step into your shoes and fill the leadership void created by your untimely demise?

I posed this hypothetical struck-by-lightening question to 400 directors recently in a survey about leadership succession. The results were amazing. Only 30 percent of the directors were confident that the operation of their center would continue smoothly and that personnel and systems were in place to ensure an efficient transition. Ten percent of the directors responded that chaos would reign if they died suddenly and that no one was equipped to step into their position and assume the leadership role. The remaining directors indicated that things would be shaky but still functional; that someone could cover their responsibilities until a formal search to find a replacement was concluded.

Author and organization consultant David Baron once quipped, "The brightest business people recognize that while death is unavoidable, their organization need not follow them to the grave." Sound advice, even for administrators of early care and education programs.

When you board an airplane, one of the first instructions the flight attendant gives is to think about your exit strategy in case of an emergency. A well-crafted risk management plan can help minimize the disastrous consequences to your center should a tragedy befall you. A risk management plan ensures that policies are in place for things like computer passwords and safe deposit box combinations. But a center needs much more than a risk management plan. It also needs a comprehensive leadership succession plan.

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What is Leadership Succession?

The transition of the directorship reverberates throughout a center. It is a significant and pivotal event in the life of an organization. When done right, it can infuse vitality into a program, providing fresh ideas and new perspectives for the future. When done wrong, it can result in earthquake-like tremors throughout a center, creating instability, uncertainty, and havoc. The replacement of leadership is disruptive because it changes lines of communication, affects decision making, and generally disturbs the equilibrium of daily activities.

Leadership succession planning rests on the supposition that transitions work best when they are approached intentionally. A leadership succession plan is a deliberate and systematic effort by your organization to ensure leadership continuity in the directorship and other key leadership roles. It can help your center develop and retain its most capable employees, preserve your program's institutional memory, and ensure that your organization continues to meet all its legal obligations. Developing a comprehensive leadership succession plan involves thinking about two things: systems and people.

Are Systems in Place to Ensure a Smooth Transition?

Assuming you plan a less dramatic departure from Mother Earth than being hit by a bolt of lightening, thinking about leadership succession involves thinking about the infrastructure of your program. Your infrastructure is all the formal and informal systems you have established to ensure that a new replacement can be socialized into your role with a minimum of disruption.

There is no single formula for managing transitions because each organization is different. If you are an owner of a center and operate a private proprietary program, your needs and interests will be quite different from those of a director of a nonprofit center who is accountable to a governing board or agency executive team. The important point is that regardless of the legal auspice of your program, systems need to be in place to handle both anticipated and unanticipated changes in leadership.

Are People in Place to Ensure a Smooth Transition?

In my research, I have found that only 27 percent of directors feel they were well prepared to handle the range of tasks required of them when they first assumed their administrative roles. This is not surprising given that most directors are promoted into the administrative ranks from teaching. Their classroom experience simply does not prepare them for leading and managing others.

This does not need to be the case. When programs develop a culture of professional development whereby leadership is delegated at all levels of the organization, it is possible to create a center that does not experience chaos when the director leaves. When an administrative position opens, staff have been groomed to move into higher levels of leadership responsibility.

In programs like this, directors think deliberately about job descriptions and create a career lattice within their centers where roles reflect expanding spheres of leadership accountability. In these centers leadership is talked about, practiced, and nurtured at all levels of the organization. Assistant teachers, teachers, support staff, and administrative staff are all given opportunities to develop the technical and interpersonal skills essential for leadership. It is possible, for example, to think about accountability as moving from managing oneself to managing a few others, to managing groups, to managing external constituencies.

Creating a culture of professional development that supports leadership succession also means thinking deliberately about formal and informal mentor relationships. Most leaders in organizations have emerged as leaders because they were identified and mentored by established leaders. Mentors make it safe for fledgling leaders to spread their wings, take on challenging assignments that broaden their knowledge base, and try out new tasks that expand their repertoire of skills.

Take some time to think about what leadership succession means in your center. What are you doing today that will help ensure a smooth transition for your successor, whether you anticipate that transition taking place tomorrow, next year, or ten years from now? A well-crafted leadership succession plan is the best gift you can give your center when you move on to other earthly or heavenly pursuits.

Paula Jorde Bloom is Director of the Center for Early Childhood Leadership. This article is an excerpt from Dr. Bloom's newest book Leadership in Action: How Effective Directors Get Things Done published by New Horizons.

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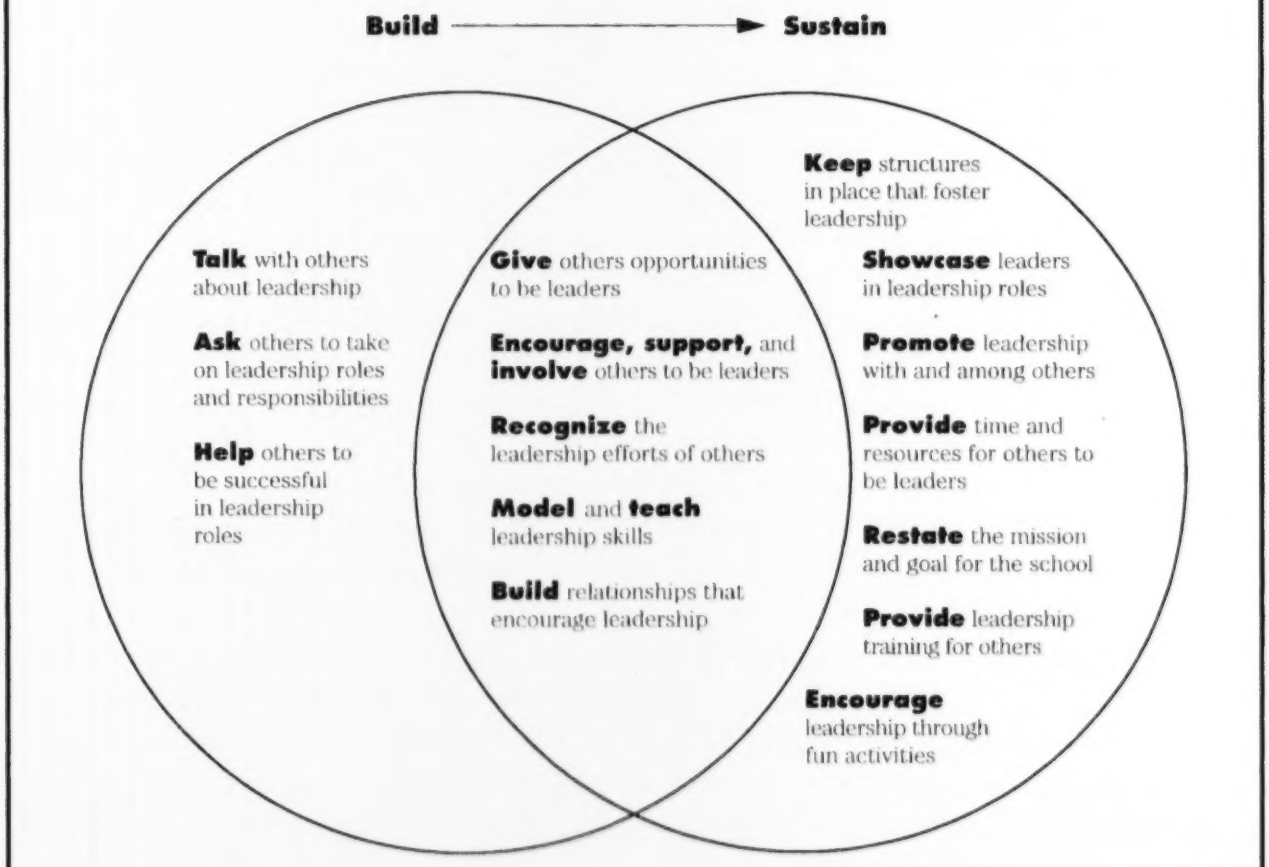
The Director's Toolbox

Effective leaders have one foot firmly planted in the present while the other is poised to step forward into the future. As director, you are the critical link between the present and future realities of your organization. Your role in identifying and building leadership potential in your center and then creating the environment to nurture and sustain that potential is key to a smooth transition. Here are some things you can do to build and sustain leadership capacity.

How Directors Build and Sustain Leadership Capacity


Build
Sustain
Talk with others about leadership
Ask others to take on leadership roles and responsibilities
Help others to be successful in leadership roles
Give others opportunities to be leaders
Encourage, support, and involve others to be leaders
Recognize the leadership efforts of others
Model and teach leadership skills
Build relationships that encourage leadership
Keep structures in place that foster leadership
Showcase leaders in leadership roles
Promote leadership with and among others
Provide time and resources for others to be leaders
Restate the mission and goal for the school
Provide leadership training for others
Encourage leadership through fun activities

From Pechaura, J. M. (2003). How principals build leadership capacity in others. In L. Lambert, Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement (p. 118). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

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Planning Ahead

NLU Courses for Directors

Winter Term begins
January 12, 2004

Online Courses

ECE512 (2 s.h.)
Early Childhood Curriculum

ECE515 (3 s.h.)
Financial & Legal Aspects of Child Care Management

ESR507 (2 s.h.)
Graduate Research: Empirical/ Quantitative

On-Campus Courses

ECE510 (3 s.h.)
Child, Family & Community

ECE512 (2 s.h.)
Early Childhood Curriculum

ECE593 (2 s.h.)
Seminar in Early Childhood Education

EPS500A (3 s.h.)
Human Development with a Focus on Early Childhood

FND503 (3 s.h.)
Historical and Philosophical Foundations in Early Childhood

For more information about the Early Childhood Administration degree program, contact Doug Clark at dclark@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7711

Plan to Join Us in January!

The Center for Early Childhood Leadership Faculty and Staff will host a Suite Talk at the Chicago Metro AEYC Conference Thursday, January 29, 2004

Professional Development Opportunities

Directors' Technology Training - Intermediate Level

Made possible by funding from Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the goal of Directors' Technology Training is to improve the computer skills of directors and increase their access to management resources through the Internet. Each seven-day training event is limited to 12 participants and priority is given to directors whose programs serve IDHS-funded children. Participants must have successfully completed the Introductory Level of Director's Technology Training, ECE534, or demonstrates equivalent competence.

January 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, 22, 27, 2004

Location: National-Louis University
Evanston Campus

April 13, 14, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 2004

Location: Heartland Community College
Bloomington, IL

Registration of $65 includes all course materials.

Participants may receive 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE535, Technology in Child Care Administration II) by paying an additional fee. This course is applicable to the core competency requirements for the Illinois Director Credential and NLU graduate degrees in Early Childhood Administration.

Winter Management Institute: Grantwriting & Fundraising: Essential Skills for Program Development

March 5-6, 2004

In the wake of a tightening economy and new policy priorities, directors need effective strategies for identifying and pursuing funding opportunities and developing successful grant proposals. Facilitated by Dr. Chip Donohue, this skill-building workshop for early childhood professionals will address grantwriting as an essential skill and examine the fundraising process as an integral part of an organization's strategic plan. Participants will receive practical advice for developing a fundraising plan, researching funding sources, and drafting winning grant proposals. The institute will also spotlight successful fundraising techniques, "out of the box" fundraising ideas, and a number of grantwriting and fundraising resources for directors.

Location: Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University
Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee is $199, includes food and all institute materials.

Participants may receive 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE540 Grantwriting and Fundraising for Early Childhood Programs) by paying an additional fee and completing follow-up assignments. This course is applicable to the core competency requirements for the Illinois Director Credential and NLU graduate degrees in Early Childhood Administration.

For more information about these training opportunities, contact Eileen Eisenberg at eeisenberg@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703

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The Accreditation Corner

NAEYC Board Approves Draft Early Childhood Program Standards

Beginning in 2005, early childhood programs seeking NAEYC Accreditation will have to demonstrate compliance with each of the NAEYC early childhood program standards. To prepare for that change, the Commission on NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria drafted explicit NAEYC standards for programs serving children from birth through kindergarten.

The NAEYC Governing Board recently approved these draft standards, which describe early childhood programs that consistently promote positive learning and developmental outcomes for all young children, including children with disabilities. Five of the draft program standards focus on children and their learning and development. The others focus on the elements needed to foster excellent programs—teaching staff; family and community partnerships; and leadership and administration.

Focus Area: Children

Relationships: The program promotes positive relationships among all children and adults to encourage each child's sense of individual worth and belonging as part of a community, and to foster each child's ability to contribute as a responsible community member.

Curriculum: The program implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following domains: aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, language, physical, and social.

Teaching: The program uses developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child's learning and development in the context of the program's curriculum goals.

Assessment: The program is informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to provide information on children's learning and development. These assessments occur within the context of reciprocal communications with families and with sensitivity to the cultural contexts in which children develop. Assessment results are used to benefit children by informing sound decisions about children, teaching, and program improvement.

Health: The program promotes the nutrition and health of all children and staff and protects them from preventable illness and injury.

Focus Area: Teaching Staff

Teachers: The program employs and supports a teaching staff that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and interests.

Focus Area: Family and Community Partnerships

Families: The program establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child's family to foster children's development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.

Communities: The program establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children's communities to support the achievement of program goals.

Focus Area: Leadership and Administration

Physical Environment: The program provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments, including facilities, equipment, and materials, to facilitate child and staff learning and development. To this end, a program structures a safe and healthful environment.

Leadership and Management: The program effectively implements policies, procedures, and systems in support of stable staff and strong personnel, fiscal, and program management so that all children, families and staff have high-quality experiences.

Building on these draft early childhood program standards, the Commission on NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria will now focus on developing accreditation performance criteria for each standard, and designing new accreditation assessment instruments.

Family-Friendly Practices

Cherished Children Early Learning Center

Located in Mundelein, Illinois, Cherished Children Early Learning Center serves the families of 220 children ranging from six weeks to ten years old. Carol Sternal is the owner/director. Earlier this year, Carol was among the directors sponsored by the AT&T Family Care Development Fund to attend the Family-Friendly Directors training event hosted by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership.

As a participant in the institute, Carol was equipped with a family-friendly audit assessment tool to aid in informing the design of her program improvement plan focused on parents' needs. To Carol's surprise, one item that emerged from the survey was how frustrated parents became when trying to remember the names of all the teachers who comprise Cherished Children's large staff.

Carol credits her introduction to the family-friendly audit not only as a tool for better understanding her clientele, but also for its usefulness in determining clear and prompt paths of follow-up activity. In this particular instance, she created name badges for each member of the Cherished Children staff. On each badge, she also included the staff member's years of service with the program. According to Carol, this small gesture was a huge success. Parents were very pleased with her quick response and the teachers were equally pleased by the recognition.

In addition to the name badges idea, Carol has also instituted other program enhancements as a result of the family-friendly audit. A parent resource center has been established, complete with a video lending library and a wider variety of educational materials for parents share with their children. Carol has created a special bulletin board to circulate current news items of importance to families. The center's annual calendar of parent education meetings and family fun events has also been expanded as a result of the feedback drawn from the family-friendly audit.

Director's Profile

Joleen Patton Merging programs and building one strong team

As a senior at Central High School in Camp Point, Illinois, Joleen Patton had a clear sense of the path ahead. "I didn't really think about doing anything else," she said of her decision to pursue a career in early care and education. "It seemed like the right fit for me."

Looking back, there's no doubt that the fit was perfect. Joleen graduated from Lincoln Land Community College with a degree in Child Care Services and found work as a Head Start home visitor. In 1981, she was promoted to education coordinator, a role that allowed her to learn about managing an early childhood program. In 1989, St. Mary Hospital was opening a child care center for their employees, and Joleen was hired to start up the program. After a business merger that joined St. Mary's with local competitor Blessing Hospital, she was called upon to lead the transition and was named Program Director of Blessing Hospital Child Care Center in Quincy, Illinois.

Blessing Hospital Child Care Center is open seven days a week from 5:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The center serves children of employee families as well as those from the local community. Blessing's infant/toddler component of the program is among the largest in the state.

Commenting on her experiences as the director , Joleen said, "It was a big challenge because Blessing had just purchased my employer and both hospitals had child care centers." She went on to say, "the greatest challenge was to take the two centers with different histories and cultures and merge them into one team that worked well together."

Joleen has learned many lessons in her fourteen years at Blessing. "I learned that it takes time for members of a team to learn to work well together." She adds, "There needs to be a lot of communication and the director must be patient. I also learned that regardless of the manager's perspective, it is important to really listen and try to identify with your staff's perspectives as well."

Prior to 2000, Blessing Hospital Child Care Center was operating in four different areas on two hospital campuses. The recent construction of a 23,500 square foot facility has made it possible to house the entire program in one central location. In addition to her work as program director, Joleen was instrumental in planning and designing the new facility. As she puts it, "It was exciting to be involved in building a child care center from the shovel to the door locks!"

By all accounts Joleen has enjoyed great success in serving her clientele. According to an internal survey of hospital employees, satisfaction runs high among those making use of the childcare center at Blessing. Satisfaction also remains high among the clientele of families from the local community as evidenced by annual customer surveys.

Since assuming her role at Blessing, Joleen has worked steadily to complete a four-year degree and this past summer she joined the Early Childhood Administration online graduate program at National-Louis University. She has also earned the Illinois Directors Credential. She is President of the Board for Child Care in Health Care and also serves on the Board of Directors for PACT Head Start, the program that once employed her.

Early Childhood Administration M.Ed./C.A.S. Online Cohort Convenes June 2004

ECA online cohort members Malcolm Williams of Chicago and Teri Ferentz of Incline Village, NV, collaborate at the convening residency in June 2003.

National-Louis University's graduate degree program in Early Childhood Administration (ECA) will convene its next cohort on June 13, 2004 for a six-day residency in Wheeling, Illinois. Two follow-up residencies are scheduled at the midpoint and culmination of the 24-month sequence with the remaining coursework delivered online.

The ECA Masters in Education (M.Ed.) sequence is a 34 s.h. option designed for students who have a baccalaureate degree. The Certificate of Advanced Study (C.A.S.) is a 30 s.h. option designed for students who already possess a master's degree in education. For more information about the ECA online cohort program, write to ecaonline@nl.edu or call:

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